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Into the Limelight: HD video + DSLRs

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Into the Limelight: HD video + DSLRs

Posted on **June 1, 2010** by **Editor**



By Jenn Hernandez

A few weeks ago I was asked how I'd like my performance of a form in a local sport karate tournament to be captured: "Would you like me to take video, or photos?"

The inquirer was not a hired videographer nor a photographer with thousands of dollars of fancy equipment in tow—it was my fiancé armed with his new Canon T1i digital SLR (or DSLR) [1], which he is learning to use taking a photography class at his school. I opted for photography, by the way, because he's getting to be pretty good shooting in manual mode, and I'd rather not see myself in video, EVER.

Last year, when I bought my Nikon D5000 [2], I was not aware of the addition of HD video, though it had HD video capabilities; my intended use was strictly still photography. (I am a photography major, after all.) Now I'm thinking about playing with the video options a bit, though it'll probably consist of me following my cats around and capturing their silly antics. Hardly award-winning stuff here.

The HD capabilities of SLR cameras have come into the limelight with coverage around a, "juried narrative film prize — essentially the best feature film" [3] for Lena Dunham's Tiny Furniture,[4] a film shot completely with the Canon 7D [5][6], at the 2010 South by Southwest Music and Media Conference.[7] This opens the doors to all kinds of aspiring film makers, or those who just want to experiment with a media which was probably not previously available to them. I'm thinking college students and recent grads.

In Vince Laforet's blog, he previews a "hybrid shoot" using a Canon HDSLR for video, and one for still documentary photography. Considering all the trouble his crew went to in outfitting the HDSLR, he explains that,

the LOOK of these cameras is incredibly unique – the video...looks incredibly close to 35mm motion picture film ... Pulling off a similar production with a 35mm film of system would be significantly more time consuming and expensive – there is absolutely zero doubt about it...

So there absolutely is reason behind all of this madness. I had to mention this because I sometimes catch myself asking the very same question...and then I see the results on screen and all doubt is removed.[8]

Laforet took photos of the production process for his blog, including an impressive jumble of gear and wires.

Now, I don't mean to say that a DSLR comes cheap, but it's relatively less than a full list of gear needed for a typical video shoot. The package of high quality still photographs AND 24-30 frames-per-second HD video, paired with the support of online video hosting sites, such as YouTube[9] and Vimeo,[10] can make it worth it.

Vimeo led the way in 2007 offering HD video,[11] which became so popular that Youtube and others soon followed suit. The casual internet users began to notice that online videos started to look less horrible in terms of resolution. The following are some examples of the difference in resolutions [12] from standard (360p) to HD (720 and 1080p), as well as some comparisons [13] between HD and non-HD video, if you're still confused as to what the hype is all about. Can you see the difference?

Concerning the subject of HDSLRs, I spoke with the Berglund Center's [14] Senior Video Editor, Greg Boone. This summer he's working on a project shooting an HDSLR for a documentary [15] about a man with Friedreich's Ataxia, who is competing in an elite bike race, the Race Across America (RAAM). [16] Greg told me that the choice to shoot with HDSLRs was based solely on cost—comparing them to other digital medium (for example, Pacific University's Media Arts department's[17] two Panasonic P2s cost about \$5500 each, without the cards. A 16 giga-byte card runs \$200-300, according to Greg).

Greg told me that he felt some apprehension towards shooting with an HDSLR, not knowing how much the sensor in the camera could handle, not knowing how much it was built to handle, running HD video for long periods of time. He said, "I'm still wary of ... a small body camera doing a full body camera's work. ...maybe I'm just jealous and a little bit ticked off that you can get [the functionality] in a smaller camera".

So why not use those new little camcorders if you want to shoot in HD? I felt immediately like I had asked a silly question. Greg also explained to me that HDSLRs were incomparable to small hand-held consumer HD camcorders because 1) there is not enough functionality (these are for people shooting silly pet antics and birthday parties...in HD) and 2) neither is there any quality control past a certain point (the zoom turns to digital zoom without warning, quickly producing grain in the video). Greg went on to assure me that HDSLRs were probably the most reasonable, cost effective choice for the prosumer.

An HDSLR is still a DSLR camera first, *capable* of shooting HD video. That doesn't mean it's the best option, but for many dabbling in film or just starting out, it is definitely a viable option. I'm

sticking to still photography with my DSLR, however, though I can see the advantages of having HD capabilities plus all the options for different lenses and such inherent to the camera functions. Who knows, maybe at a future tournament I'll be the one asking my fiancé: "Would you like me to take video, or photos?"

Endnotes

- [1] <http://www.usa.canon.com/consumer/controller?act=ModelInfoAct&fcategoryid=139&modelid=18385>
- [2] <http://www.nikonusa.com/Find-Your-Nikon/Product/Digital-SLR/25452/D5000.html>
- [3] <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/20/movies/20tiny.html>
- [4] <http://tinyfurniture.com/>
- [5] <http://philipbloom.co.uk/2010/03/20/film-shot-on-7d-wins-sxsw-juried-best-film-prize/>
- [6] <http://www.usa.canon.com/consumer/controller?act=ModelInfoAct&fcategoryid=139&modelid=19356>
- [7] <http://www.sxsw.com/>
- [8] <http://blog.vincentlaforet.com/2010/02/24/so-what-does-an-hdslr-hybrid-shoot-look-like/>
- [9] <http://www.youtube.com>
- [10] <http://vimeo.com/>
- [11] <http://www.switched.com/2010/04/06/vimeos-blake-whitman-talks-hd-video-dslrs-and-web-communities/>
- [12] <http://youtube-global.blogspot.com/2009/11/1080p-hd-comes-to-youtube.html>
- [13] <http://gizmodo.com/5102772/youtube-goes-hd>
- [14] <http://bcis.pacificu.edu/>
- [15] <http://theataxian.com/>
- [16] <http://teamfara.blogspot.com/2010/01/about-raam.html>
- [17] <http://www.pacificu.edu/as/media/>

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8 THOUGHTS ON “INTO THE LIMELIGHT: HD VIDEO + DSLRS”

Raquel Capraro

on **January 30, 2014 at 6:15 PM** said:

I

podlogi bambusowe

on **February 2, 2014 at 12:21 PM** said:

I do not know if it's just me or if perhaps everyone else experiencing issues with your site.

It looks like some of the text on your content are running off the screen. Can someone else please comment and let me know if this is happening to them as well? This might be a problem with my browser because I've had this happen previously. Appreciate it

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on **February 5, 2014 at 11:38 AM** said:

Spot on with this write-up, I honestly believe that this site needs a great deal more attention. I

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on **February 5, 2014 at 11:39 AM** said:

Peculiar article, exactly what I wanted to find.

Seymour

on **February 5, 2014 at 4:56 PM** said:

Hi there, yes this paragraph is genuinely good and I have learned lot of things from it about blogging.

thanks.

Leslie Emanuelson

on **February 5, 2014 at 11:43 PM** said:

Grande blog. Il mio blog anche loro hanno molti il ??traffico proveniente da Stati Uniti, India, Regno Unito.

Melba

on **February 6, 2014 at 5:56 AM** said:

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Miki Grismer

on **February 6, 2014 at 9:49 AM** said:

Hallo danke. Ich habe diesen Artikel für meine Aufgabe verwiesen. Dank